



## Representative Ed Orcutt

### Committee Assignments:

Natural Resources  
Children and  
Family Services  
Finance

### INSIDE

- Join us at a Town Hall Meeting
- Balancing a budget without tax hikes
- Protecting our natural resources

# Rep. Ed Orcutt

## REPORT FROM OLYMPIA 18<sup>TH</sup> LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

Serving the 18<sup>th</sup> District including portions of Lewis, Cowlitz and Clark counties.

February 2002

Dear friends,

Let me say what an honor it is to be working on your behalf in Olympia. My term as 18<sup>th</sup> District representative begins at a critical time for us. Decisions are to be made on a new funding proposal for transportation improvements. The state has a \$1.2 billion shortfall in its operating budget. And in the meantime, families are worried about keeping their jobs in the current economic recession.

I welcome these and other challenges that we must address to protect our quality of life in Southwest Washington and throughout the state.

I also want to express my thanks to John Pennington for his years of dedicated service to our communities and for his support in this transition to becoming your newest representative. Many of us admire the work John has done to help protect our valuable natural resources, improve our local job opportunities, and even help us through recent natural disasters. I intend to work hard to be as effective and responsive as John has always been for the families of the 18<sup>th</sup> District.

The 2002 legislative session will require that I spend much of my time in Olympia over the next several weeks. I hope you'll take the time to contact my Olympia office with your ideas and concerns. Also I will help you if you're having difficulties in your dealings with state government.

It's a privilege to serve you, and I look forward to hearing from you.

A handwritten signature of Ed Orcutt in blue ink.

Ed Orcutt  
State Representative

### I'D LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU

Because this is an election year, the law allows me to send you only two House-sponsored mailings: one now and one after the legislative session. I can, however, continue to communicate and correspond with constituents who contact me with questions or requests for information regarding specific issues. This, of course, is part of my job as your state representative.

#### REP. ED ORCUTT

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Please take a few minutes to read this letter, and if you have questions regarding issues addressed here or any other issues that arise as the 2002 session moves forward, call me or send me a detailed message outlining your request, and I'll be happy to reply.

Also, if you're having trouble dealing with state government agencies, I may be able to help you. It's my privilege to serve you, as well as represent you.

**TOLL FREE HOTLINE: 1 - 800 - 562 - 6000**

## BUDGET WOES SPELL TROUBLE FOR TAXPAYERS

Washington is expected to have a shortfall of at least \$1.2 billion in the two-year budget Democrats wrote to pay for state government operations and services. Even if we spent every penny of our state's reserves, we would still be more than \$360 million in the red.

Signs of our slowing economy have been evident for more than a year, and the situation only worsened after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

As we address this challenge, lawmakers must remember that many Washington families are also struggling. It would be easy to balance the budget simply by raising taxes, but I don't believe it's fair to ask families to pay more when many are worried about how to pay their bills — especially when dealing with the loss of their jobs.

I wish I could promise you that critical state services won't be cut, or that taxes won't be raised. Unfortunately, now that Democrats control the legislative process, these are the options being considered.

I will promise, however, to do my very best to work with the Democrats to find an acceptable, responsible solution to the state's budget woes. Citizens are counting on lawmakers to work together to develop a plan that protects taxpayers and citizens who truly need services.

### GOVERNOR'S BUDGET PROTECTS BUREAUCRACY INSTEAD OF VULNERABLE CITIZENS

The first proposal for correcting the budget shortfall was offered by the governor in December. It calls for cuts in funding for services to disabled citizens, nursing homes, and pharmacists who provide prescription drugs to low-income citizens on Medicaid. It would raise state taxes by \$100 million and transfer to the counties and cities the responsibility of balancing the state budget.

But the most discouraging thing about the governor's proposal is what it *fails* to do: It does not make a serious attempt to reduce the number of state employees. It calls for a net reduction of just 355 employees (less than one half of 1 percent of the 99,300 state FTEs). In fact, it also provides a pay raise for state employees in September.

In my opinion, the governor's approach is backwards. His plan offers raises to state employees at the expense of the needy and working families. That's not what's best for the citizens of our state. Instead, we should be looking for ways to cut bureaucracy and do the least harm to front-line services for those in need.

The bottom line is the governor's budget plan still spends over a billion dollars more than the state will collect in revenue this biennium. The state should do what working families do when they fall on tough times — establish priorities, control spending and pay for essential needs. In the end, that's what would best serve the citizens of our state.

## GOVERNOR'S BUDGET PROPOSAL

### AN OVERVIEW

Total Revenues: ..... \$21.374 billion

Total Expenditures: ... \$22.530 billion

**Difference: ..... -\$1.156 billion**

Ending fund balance: \$0

Emergency

Reserves balance: \$303 million

### KEY BUDGET CUTS

-\$35 million for nursing homes

-\$54 million for higher education

-\$35 million for Medicaid reimbursements for prescription drugs

-\$31 million for state assistance to the disabled

-\$14 million in block grants to K-12 schools

-\$72 million in local government health district and criminal justice funding

### TAX INCREASES

3% liquor tax ..... \$4.7 million

10% gambling tax ..... \$73.7 million

Use tax on shipping ..... \$20 million

Hydraulic project fees ..... \$4.3 million

Hunting and fishing

license increase ..... \$1 million

# REPORT FROM OLYMPIA

## IMPROVING TRANSPORTATION: KEEPING HIGHWAYS SAFE AND PEOPLE AND PRODUCTS MOVING

The 2001 legislative session will again bring about efforts to adopt a transportation funding package. Negotiations on a funding plan broke down over the summer, leaving some critical projects throughout the state without funding.

The Legislature will be back at the drawing board this session to try to solve the state's transportation needs. In the meantime, the governor already has dusted off the same plan rejected by lawmakers last year (one he refused to send to the voters), which includes big tax increases:

- 9-cent-per-gallon gas tax increase
- 12-cent-per-gallon increase on diesel
- Increased sales tax on car purchases
- Increased weight fees on trucks and RVs
- \$50 license registration fee

We all understand the need to invest in projects that will reduce traffic congestion in our state in order to keep our economy strong and to protect our quality of life. However, we also understand that families have many priorities that must be considered before we decide to raise taxes.

We need collaboration. We should be looking to bring people together to solve this statewide issue, which is why I'm insisting that you have the final say on any new tax package. While the governor continues to reject the idea of a public vote, the citizens have made it clear that they want a voice in these tax decisions.

## PROTECTING OUR NATURAL RESOURCES

One of my priorities in my new capacity will be to ensure that we have laws and regulations that continue to protect our valuable resources in Southwest Washington. In a district where the pressures of urban growth are being brought to bear upon our rural communities, I want to continue the tremendous work that John Pennington carried out to ensure that the protection of our natural resources is done with workable rules that protect citizens against unnecessary and burdensome regulations. I also hope to provide local communities with the authority to protect resources in a manner that makes sense for each of us and our neighbors.

I'll be supporting reforms to our clean air laws that would allow local air authorities, rather than the state Department of Ecology, to set outdoor burning policies in areas within urban growth boundaries where clean air standards are being attained.

We want clean air laws to be as workable as possible, and the one-size-fits-all approach often works against us, especially in rural areas where citizens have to drive long distances to haul away yard debris.

I also want to continue reforming our hunting regulations so that we treat hunters fairly, provide efficient services to those who buy licenses and tags, and protect our wildlife resources for future generations. I'm strongly opposed to the governor's proposed increase in fishing and hunting licenses. The outdoorsmen already are paying more than their fair share. It's time to get the agencies' houses in order before we consider raising fees.

## YOUR PRIORITIES ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Just prior to his departure, John Pennington sent a questionnaire to many of you asking your priorities on environmental issues. Below are preliminary results from the 113 responses we received.

*List the environmental issue of greatest concern to you:*

Land use .....	35
Outdoor burning .....	22
Water quality .....	27
Fish & wildlife mgmt. ....	9
Protection of habitat .....	7
Hunting regulations .....	5
Fishing regulations .....	4

# REPORT FROM OLYMPIA

## 18<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT CALENDAR

### PLEASE JOIN US AT A TOWN HALL MEETING

Please join us at one of the upcoming town hall meetings on February 23. These meetings are open to all and there is no cost or reservations required. We'd just like to hear your ideas and concerns.

#### SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23

**10:00 a.m. Kelso** - District 2 Fire Station  
701 Vine

**12:30 p.m. Battle Ground** - Maple Grove Middle School  
12500 NE 199th St.

**3:00 p.m. Washougal** - PUD Bldg.  
89 "C" Street

*Hope to see  
you there!*

## DISTRICT DAY SET FOR FEB. 18

All 18<sup>th</sup> District residents are invited to join Rep. Mielke, Sen. Zarelli and me in Olympia for 18<sup>th</sup> District Day on Monday, Feb. 18. You will receive a tour of the Capitol, watch the Legislature in action, and have a no-host brown-bag lunch with your 18<sup>th</sup> District legislators.

Reservations are required. If you'd like to participate or if you have questions, please call my Olympia office at (360) 786-7812.



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**ED ORCUTT**  
REPRESENTATIVE

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